

Japan
Fisheries
Association



NO.60, SEPT. 2008

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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

Japan Int'l Seafood Expo

Japan Int'l Seafood Show marks 10th anniversary with record number of exhibitors

The 10th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo was held under the sponsorship of the Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) at the Tokyo Big Sight on July 23-25. A record number of about 500 companies and organizations related to seafood processing and other technologies participated in 570 active booths, an increase from about 450 exhibitors with 560 booths in the previous exposition held last July.

This year Chuo Gyorui Co., a major wholesaler, was the first participant ever from Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market, and the All Japan Kamaboko Makers & Marine Product Processing Industry Association from the processing industry also participated for the first time.

The number of visitors, mainly industrial users and foodservice operators, totaled 26,882 during the 3-day period, which was an increase of 642 over the previous year.

Continued from last year, "Sushi Expo," and the "International Exposition of Fishery Aquaculture Technology" were held concurrently

with the main show. A new feature of this year's show was the Exposition on Marine Clean-up Technology, which addressed important issues related to marine conservation.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the Expo, the organizer invited retail consumers as well, and held various events for children.

Speaking at the opening ceremony on July 23, JFA President Isao Nakasu said: "I am delighted to see this exposition held with a record number of participants on its 10th anniversary. As you are aware, fishermen throughout Japan staged a concerted one-day strike on July

15 to protest the ever-soaring fuel prices. But today we set this difficult question aside to rather focus our attention on the basic aspects of fisheries. We wish to mobilize our wisdom on



Japanese poster of the Seafood Show

how to vitalize the fisheries industry in Japan and promote fish consumption."

Participants from overseas numbered 100 from 14 countries and one territory with those from Oman, Russia and Tunisia participating for their first time. Chinese companies also participated despite the recent issue involving frozen gyoza dumplings that caused some health problem for Japanese consumers. They said that they are confident in the safety and security of their food products and are intent to recover the trust of Japanese consumers.

A numbers of new technologies relating to preserving the freshness of fish, rationalizing the processing stages and enhancing hygienic control were introduced, including chilling and freezing facilities, and measuring, packaging and slicing equipment.

Regarding fishing vessel reforms, various new methods were introduced on landing efficiency and catch distribution with the aim to maintain the value of the catch.

In the exposition on fishery aquaculture technology, about 20 research institutions and engineering firms introduced state of the art technologies.

During the Expo, approximately 40 presentations and seminars were held on such topics as marine clean-up, aquaculture technology, sushi and fishery product distribution.



A demonstration on ecosystem conservation using tuna

During the Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo, a demonstration on the 280-kg head of a tuna was staged by Morita Tsurizao, a young third-generation fish



Morita (center) demonstrating tuna cutting

Photo by courtesy of OPRT

seller at Izumigin Shoten in Urayasu Fish Market in Chiba Prefecture, adjacent to Tokyo. Morita is also the leader and the vocalist of the Rock Band "Gyoko" (Fishing Port) that is promoting music related to fisheries.

In a talk show with Nao Toko, Miss Japan "Day of the Sea," Morita said emphatically: "The starting point of ecosystem conservation is 'to leave no food unused!' There is much talk on TV and other media about which specific parts of a fish are delicious but I say all the parts of a fish have their good taste." He also said he hopes that consumers will maintain effective communications with fishermen in using fish, such as knowledge on where the fish was caught or on the best way to cook it."

The show, aimed at publicizing the benefits of fish to consumers, was held as a special event marking the 10th anniversary of the Seafood Show.

Further progress of full-cycle tuna farming

Expectations for tuna farming are rising in Japan from year to year as regulations on the catch of wild tunas have been increasingly tightened around the world.

"There is a need to realize commercially feasible full-cycle tuna farming (from breeding through harvest) as soon as possible while ensuring management of the resources," says an official in charge of tuna farming at Maruha Nichiro Seafoods, Inc.

Addressing a seminar at the Japan International Seafood and Technology Expo on July 24, Takashi Kusano, director of the company's tuna farming division, analyzed the environment surrounding bluefin tuna farming. "Catches of tunas around the world saw a rapid increase since the 1980s aided by the progress of fishing techniques. But supply to the Japanese market has since been on a declining trend because of dwindling wild resources internationally and tightened regulations on fishing, which, in turn, have created greater expectations for tuna farming."

Explaining the history and the situation of tuna farming overseas, Kusano observed that the "Production of farmed tuna overseas expanded to 35,000 tons in 2003. But no further growth in production from farming can be expected at present as regulations on the catch of wild tunas for farming have been tightened."

"In Japan, private-level projects in tuna farming have shown growth since the mid-1990s. Production of farmed tuna in Japan, which stood at 1,000 tons in 2002, was enlarged to 3,000 tons in 2005 and 4,000 tons in 2007 and is certain to surpass 4,000 tons in 2008. Next year, production is expected to grow to nearly 8,000 tons on the assumption of the current yields, because harvests of juvenile tunas last year were favorable," he observed.

For the expansion of production in the future, Kusano advised that it is necessary to develop cages and a feeding control system specifically aimed at utilizing offshore fishing grounds where tuna farming has not yet been practiced.

He presented the company's current efforts to develop seed production techniques and a new mixed feed for aquaculture for which it obtained a license through joint development with its affiliated Hayashikane Sangyo Co. in 2006.

In meeting the challenge to realize offshore farming, Kusano referred to the company's ongoing projects at eight fishing grounds. Specifically, he explained the project of one of its affiliates to promote the use of large floating-type cages and to set up the cage

management system by using large support vessels.

"Maruha Nichiro will continue its efforts to enhance productivity and ensure stability in quality by fully utilizing offshore grounds suited for tuna farming," Kusano said. "One of the challenges facing us in tuna farming is how to secure a stable supply of juvenile fish. For this goal, it is indispensable to establish techniques for artificial breeding and quantity production. We believe it is crucial to further advance research on artificial breeding to ensure the stable use of seeds, fully taking the resource conservation into consideration," he concluded.

Fuel price issue

Japanese government helps fishers

The Fisheries Agency of the Japanese government announced on July 28 a package of emergency measures totaling ¥74.5 billion in order to alleviate the impact of soaring fuel prices on Japanese fishermen.

The package was discussed and agreed at meetings of ministers concerned over the repercussions of high oil prices on the fishing industry.

The highlight of the relief measures is that the government will compensate 90% of the fuel increases for fishermen's organizations participating in a government program to reduce the amount of fuel they consume by more than 10%.

The package will also include expanded interest-free loans and financial assistance to fishermen who were forced to suspend their fishing operation or reduce the number of fishing vessels.

The fund for these measures will be allocated from the current budget for fiscal 2008 ending in March 2009.

MEL Japan News

MEL Japan actively publicizing its eco-label system

On July 11, the JFA held its annual summer evening reception, inviting fishery

attaches from foreign embassies in Tokyo and joined by a number of fisheries officials who exchanged views with JFA members and representatives of the Japanese fishing industry over plates of sushi.

The MEL Japan Secretariat took this occasion to introduce the fisheries that have applied for MEL Japan certification through a Power Point presentation and the distribution of the pamphlets describing the purpose of the eco-labeling system to promote the sustainable use of fishery resources.

In response to requests from Japanese fishers, MEL Japan Secretariat staffs have also visited local cities such as Saga in Kyushu and Morioka in Iwate Prefecture to explain the MEL Japan system.



Sea of Japan Crab Pot Fishery — the first candidate for MEL Japan certification — to undergo rigorous examination

This fishery was the first to apply for MEL Japan certification and is still undergoing rigorous reexamination in order to ensure its compliance with the standards.

Meanwhile, Mr. Masato Nishino, president of the Sea of Japan Crab Pot Fishery Association, stated in a TV interview that "Although this fishery has been managed strictly by the Government's Fisheries Agency, we decided to make our voluntary efforts in the hope to secure sustainability of the resources, and applied for obtaining MEL Japan labels with the consent of association members. We also made application for chain of custody certification for distribution of the products."

"It is our hope that consumers will come to know our positive efforts in ensuring the sustainability of the resources," Nishino said.

Answers to groundless criticism of Japan's research whaling by anti-whaling groups (2)

(continued from the previous issue)

2. Japan is continuing whaling while the entire world is opposed to it.

A. It is not true that all the countries in the world are opposed to whaling. Only countries, mainly in the western world, are against it. About 37 of the 81 members of the IWC are supporting the sustainable use of the whale resources, along with Japan.

3. The continuation of whaling amid opposition from the international community will impair the international status of Japan.

A. Many of the anti-whaling countries, such as the United States and European countries, do not need to depend on marine resources for their food supply. Japan, a country surrounded by the oceans, needs to advocate with patience the position to utilize marine living resources, including whales, effectively as a food source for mankind. Numbers of countries support this position of Japan. Japan is not isolating itself in the international community or impairing its position by advocating the principle of sustainable use of whales. If Japan succumbs to the pressures from anti-whaling countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and reverses its position, it would be betraying the expectations and trust of other countries that support Japan for its principle of effective utilization of all marine living resources, including whales. Therefore, the reversal of Japan's current position would mean that Japan would impair its status in the world.

(to be continued in next issue)